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SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR NEA  
NSC FOR ROBERT BLACKWILL

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TAGS: MARR MOPS PREL IZ IT IRAQI FREEDOM

SUBJECT: ITALY'S REACTION TO NEW UN SECURITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION ON IRAQ

REF: STATE 256573

CLASSIFIED BY: POL MINISTER-COUNSELOR TOM COUNTRYMAN FOR REASON 1.5 (B)  
, (D)

¶1. (SBU) ITALY CURRENTLY HAS A CONTINGENT OF APPROXIMATELY 3,000 TROOPS IN IRAQ (UNDER BRITISH COMMAND IN IRAQ'S SOUTHERN ZONE) TAKING PART IN OPERATION ANTICA BABILONIA, WHOSE MISSION IS TO PROVIDE HUMANITARIAN AND RECONSTRUCTION ASSISTANCE. A NEW UN SECURITY RESOLUTION IS UNLIKELY TO IMMEDIATELY AFFECT ITALY'S PARTICIPATION IN IRAQI STABILIZATION EFFORTS, BUT IT COULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT TO APPROVE AN EXTENSION OF THE CURRENT MANDATE, WHICH IS DUE TO EXPIRE ON 31 DECEMBER. FURTHERMORE, AS HOLDER OF THE EU PRESIDENCY, ITALY WILL TRY TO ENSURE THAT A NEW RESOLUTION DOES NOT CREATE THE DIVISIONS BETWEEN MEMBER STATES THAT SEVERELY CRIPPLED THE EU DURING THE WEEKS LEADING UP TO THE MILITARY INTERVENTION IN IRAQ.

¶2. (U) ITALIAN FOREIGN MINISTER FRATTINI TOLD THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON 3 SEPTEMBER THAT THE EU FAVORS A BROADER UN MANDATE TO GUIDE POSTWAR IRAQ AND THAT THE FIFTEEN HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO PRESENT A COMMON POSITION. AT THE INFORMAL MEETING OF EU FOREIGN MINISTERS OVER THE WEEKEND (SEPTEL), FRATTINI SAID THAT MEMBER STATES WERE IN FAVOR OF A STRONG UN ROLE AND UN MANDATE FOR THE MULTINATIONAL FORCES. MEMBER STATES FURTHER AGREED THAT THE PEOPLE OF IRAQ MUST BECOME "MASTERS OF THEIR OWN GOVERNMENT" AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND CONTROL THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THEIR POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURES. FRATTINI MADE THE SAME POINTS DURING HIS MEETING WITH SECRETARY POWELL ON 4 SEPTEMBER IN WASHINGTON.

¶3. (C) PRIME MINISTER BERLUSCONI'S DIPLOMATIC ADVISOR, GIANNI CASTELLANETA, TOLD VISITING AMBASSADOR BLACKWILL ON 4 SEPTEMBER THAT BERLUSCONI ENDORSED THE DRAFT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION, SAYING THAT THE U.S. MUST REMAIN IN COMMAND IN IRAQ. ASKED ON HOW BEST TO APPROACH FRANCE, CASTELLANETA REPLIED THAT HE HAD DISCUSSED THE ISSUE A WEEK EARLIER WITH HIS FRENCH COUNTERPART, AND PARIS IS READY TO ACCEPT U.S. COMMAND OF A MULTINATIONAL FORCE, ESPECIALLY IF THE COMMAND IS CENTERED IN NATO INSTEAD OF CENTCOM. CASTELLANETA BELIEVED THIS APPROACH SHOULD BE CONSIDERED, PERHAPS ALONG THE AFGHAN MODEL OF SEPARATE MILITARY FORCES FOR COMBAT AND PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS.

¶4. (C) COMMENT. ITALY IS CONVINCED OF THE NEED TO PRESENT A COMMON EU POSITION TO THE UN AND ALSO IS ANXIOUS TO AVOID THE TRANSATLANTIC RIFTS CREATED BY DIFFERENCES OVER THE PREVIOUS RESOLUTION. IN ITS ROLE AS EU PRESIDENT, ITALY WILL NEED TO RECONCILE THE FRENCH INSISTENCE ON EMPHASIZING THE TRANSFER OF POLITICAL CONTROL TO THE IRAQI PEOPLE WITH THE PERCEIVED U.S. FOCUS ON SECURITY. THE ITALIANS, HOWEVER, FACE BETTER ODDS FOR ACHIEVING EU UNITY THIS TIME AROUND; THE NEW RESOLUTION, NOT DEALING WITH THE ISSUE OF MILITARY INTERVENTION, IS LESS CONTROVERSIAL, AND MEMBER STATES, HAVING ALREADY EXPERIENCED THE PAINS OF EU DISUNITY THE FIRST TIME AROUND, PROBABLY WILL BE MORE INCLINED TO AVOID A REPEAT BATTLE. END COMMENT.

SEMBLER

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